

CONTEXT OF COASTAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT IN JŪRMALA

Una Īle, Reičēla Ozola

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia

Abstract. The study examines the coastal landscape of Jūrmala as a sustainable public outdoor space, ensuring seasonal accessibility and a modern identity in the context of the beach and coastline. The spatial structure of the coastal and beach areas was studied, including the beaches and coastal areas of Bulduri, Dzintari, Majori, Dubulti, Jaundubulti, Pumpuri, Melluži, Asari, Vaivari, and Kaugurciems. Historical information was researched and the coastal and beach area was surveyed in the present day, obtaining an assessment of public outdoor spaces. Based on the data obtained from the research, coastal and beach development measures were created. **Keywords:** coastal landscape space, infrastructure, design

Introduction

The most iconic feature of Latvia's landscape is its coastline along the Gulf of Riga and the Baltic Sea. Latvia's 496 km coastline is rich in diverse beaches, including high-quality sandy and rocky beaches, as well as coastal meadows and cliffs. The Latvian coast is of unique value. It features unique landscapes, 50% of which are protected areas, as well as 630 state-protected cultural monuments. The most populous coastal cities are Liepāja, Ventspils, Riga and Jūrmala, with the majority of Latvia's population living in these areas [2; 13; 16; 7]. A study found that Riga's proximity to Jūrmala brings economic benefits and stimulates Jūrmala's growth. The Baltic Sea region is a leading destination for resorts, business tourism, active recreation, and cultural centres, offering attractions that attract tourists not only from Latvia, but also from Lithuania, Estonia, and other countries. The Baltic Sea coast is an area of national interest, boasting natural and cultural heritage. It needs to be preserved and its landscape development promoted [3; 7]. Jūrmala has been a popular resort town since the 19th century. In 2013, the entire administrative territory of Jūrmala was granted resort status. Today, Jūrmala is one of the largest resort towns in Latvia [12; 15]. The Baltic Sea coast is one of the most attractive destinations, and coastal and sea tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors. Currently, four tourism models dominate: attractions, amenities, accommodation and access. Previously, there were only three models: sun, sea and sand. The influx of tourism is influencing the transformation of culture and nature today, changing the coastal landscape – essentially a unique landscape between land and sea. The area is gradually becoming increasingly sensitive to changes in urbanisation. The influx of tourism and the transformation of coastal areas for commercial purposes affect issues of place identity, resulting in coastal cities becoming increasingly similar to each other and losing their distinctive character [12; 10; 9].

The study evaluated ten beaches in Jūrmala: Bulduri, Dzintari, Majori, Dubulti, Jaundubulti, Pumpuri, Melluži, Asari, Vaivari and Kaugurciems. It examined beach congestion, connectivity with the city and surrounding areas, and the aesthetic design and functions available to tourists and local residents. The study aimed to evaluate Jūrmala's beaches as sustainable public spaces, ensuring seasonally accessible beaches in the context of a modern place identity.

Materials and Methods

The study, conducted between 2023 and 2024, employed several methods, including cartographic, photographic, monographic, and descriptive approaches. The cartographic method involves studying all historical data, historical maps and contemporary cartographic materials. The monographic or descriptive method, on the other hand, involved compiling and describing all material obtained from the surveyed area regarding the coastline of Jūrmala city. A detailed assessment of the city's coastal landscape has been carried out, evaluating the existing functional infrastructure. Based on the research data, a unified, interconnected spatial solution for the beaches and coastline of Jūrmala has been developed, complete with a suitable brand to promote the area.

To obtain data on the current situation in the neighbourhoods and on the beach, research matrices were created during the study. These highlighted several aspects that were evaluated in all study areas. The study analysed the harmony of amenities, children's playgrounds, connectivity to cities, access paths, visitor numbers, functional beach zoning, sightlines, beach development structure, the environmental/natural base and general factors affecting information availability for each beach. It also examined Blue Flag status issues, rescue centre size

and general prohibitions in coastal areas.

Results and Discussion

Jūrmala was officially established as a city in 1959, having historically evolved from fishing villages and bathing resorts. Jūrmala became a popular resort as early as the 19th century. In 2003, it was recognised as the best resort on the Baltic Sea and, in 2005, it was awarded "Healthy City" status. In 2010, the observation tower in Dzintaru Mežaparks was opened, and Jūrmala was recognised as 'Europe's Most Outstanding Destination' in the 'Healthy Cities' category. In the same year, Dzintaru Mežaparks with its observation tower opened, and Jūrmala was recognised as the 'Most Outstanding Destination in Europe' in the 'Tourism and Water Resources' category. The city of Jūrmala has had resort status since 2013.

The development of beaches and coastlines has the potential to contribute to urban development by creating interaction and connectivity between cities and beaches. Visitors are mainly motivated by beauty, inspiration, relaxation, and the restoration of physical and mental abilities. Other motivations include opportunities for self-expression, learning, enjoying culture, observing nature, and the symbolic values, lifestyle and identity associated with the seaside [7; 8]. Visiting the coast can be associated with our perceptions of the environment, its identity, and its impact on us. The coast has its own identity, which is constantly changing and evolving. The study found that human intervention is causing some beaches to become major tourist destinations and develop into functionally rich places. This pushes local residents aside. Therefore, it is necessary to create an interconnected beach identity and character that highlights the beach's value, inspiration, culture and identity, which the study identifies as a current issue to be improved in the future. The main seaside recreational activities are swimming, water sports (such as water skiing and jet skiing), boating and sea fishing, while coastal activities include beach recreation, walking, sunbathing, picnics and enjoying the sea view [7; 14].

Various studies have been conducted on the coastal area. For example, on a Latvian scale, Professor Dr Arch. Natālija Nītavska's doctoral thesis examined the development and change of Latvia's Baltic Sea coast. Meanwhile, Dr arch. Baiba Vērpe conducted extensive research on the architecture of Jūrmala in her doctoral thesis, entitled 'The Development of Jūrmala Resort Architecture'. As part of this research, the meaning of the term 'resort' was evaluated, and it was found that it corresponds to the current situation in Jūrmala. Another study, conducted in Poland in 2020, examined the development of the Polish Baltic Sea coast and the extent to which tourism affects the development and degradation processes of the Baltic Sea coast. This study was carried out by the Department of Contemporary Architecture and Design Theory and Methodology at the University of West Pomerania [8; 3; 12]. It can therefore be concluded that if the overabundance of beach amenities with inappropriate designs continues, the beach and coastline will inevitably lose their aesthetic value and charm. However, beaches and coastlines have their own identity, formed over time, which must be preserved for future generations.

The research materials obtained during the study highlight the most important findings concerning the differences between each neighbourhood and their specific problems. These were identified using the matrix system employed in the study. Bulduri was developed on manor lands and was originally an agricultural area. Summer cottage construction developed in the 19th century, especially along the banks of the Lielupe River and later by the sea. This area became popular with wealthy Riga residents and the first

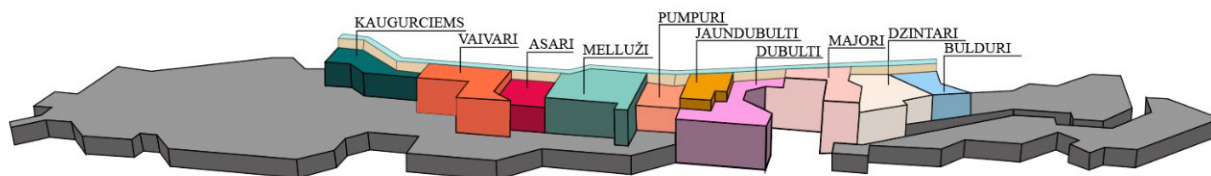


Fig. 1. Location of the studied neighborhoods within the territory of Jūrmala city [R. Ozola diagram, 2024]

railway station in Jūrmala opened here in 1877. The Dzintari area was developed on the land of the Bulduri manor and was originally called Edinburgh. It is characterised by summer cottages and historic wooden buildings. It is home to the Morberg Neo-Gothic castle and more than ten architectural monuments. Majori developed around the Majori tavern and manor. In the 19th century, it became the centre of social life in Riga's seaside resort thanks to the railway. Here you will find Jomas Street, the city's first hotel and concert hall and historic pavilions. Dubulti is the narrowest part of the city, located between the Lielupe River and the sea. As early as the 19th century, it became an elegant bathing area with guesthouses and hotels. Its development is linked to the creation of bathing areas, summer houses and concerts. In 1920, Dubulti became the centre of Jūrmala. Jaundubulti developed as an extension of Dubulti in the mid-19th century. Melluži is considered the geographical centre of Jūrmala. It is famous for being the site of the first spa, "Karlsbādi", and for strawberry cultivation. A park with an outdoor stage was created at the end of the 19th century and has been preserved to this day. Pumpuri's history is closely linked to the railway. Pumpuri Station opened in 1877 and has been known by its current name since 1939. Historically, Pumpuri was a peaceful summer cottage area that developed along the coast. Today, it is referred to as part of 'Quiet Jūrmala' because it is located further away from the tourist areas and the centre. The area is characterised by spacious green spaces, a peaceful atmosphere, low-rise buildings and well-developed cycle paths. Asari-Vaivari is a historically important fishing village. Summer cottage construction began in the 19th century, followed by the development of strawberry cultivation. One of the first sanatoriums in Jūrmala was located here. In the 20th century, Asari station was renamed Vaivari. The wooden Asari station building burned down in 1917 and was rebuilt in brick in 1927, and this building still stands today. However, two stations were created: Asari I and Asari II. To avoid confusion, Asari II station was renamed Vaivari station in 1938, and the entire neighbourhood took on the name Vaivari [5; 6; 9]. Kauguri/Kaugurciems is one of the first bathing spots where people went to the sea at the end of the 18th century.

Problems with the current situation on the coast of Jūrmala

In accordance with City Council Regulation No. 3, Jūrmala Beach is divided into three zones: active recreation, quiet recreation, and neutral recreation. However, in practice, the zoning often does not correspond to the regulations – information signs are inconsistent and do not always indicate the neutral zone, and colour markings often do not match the designated zones. Although there are stands on the beaches with icons indicating swimming areas, permitted and prohibited activities, rescue stations, children's playgrounds and showers, the boundaries and zoning of the areas are not clearly marked. The swimming season runs from 1 May to 15 October. Before the start of the season, the beach must be cleaned and, during the season, the sand must be raked regularly and rubbish collected. However, these requirements are not always met in practice. It is prohibited to bring animals or motorised vehicles to the beaches, smoke, spend the night or light fires. In 2024, residents submitted an initiative to allow pets on the beaches, but the amendments have not yet come into force. The zoning of beaches in certain neighbourhoods does not comply with the regulations:

- Bulduri: No neutral zone is indicated in nature and the markings do not comply with the regulations.
- Dzintari: the neutral zone is indicated as peaceful.
- Majori: Zoning is chaotic and quiet zones overlap with active zones.
- Dubulti: the markings do not correspond to reality; the volleyball court is located in the quiet zone.
- Jaundubulti: the entire beach is designated as a neutral zone in the regulations, but sports equipment is located there in reality.

- Pumpuri: According to the regulations, the entire beach is a neutral zone. In reality, however, there are marked active and quiet zones, as well as a children's playground.
- Melluži, Asari, Vaivari and Kaugurciems: the zoning partially overlaps, the neutral zones are not clearly defined and sports equipment is often placed in the wrong areas.

From 1997 to 2019, several beaches were awarded the Blue Flag, confirming their high quality and safety standards. However, Jūrmala withdrew from the programme in 2020 due to increased membership fees, which has had a negative impact on the condition of the beaches. Data from the 'My Sea' campaign in 2024 indicates that Jūrmala has become one of the most polluted beaches in the Baltic Sea in Latvia, particularly in the Lielupe and Majori areas. There are special conditions for beach construction – seasonal buildings must be lightweight, blend into the landscape and be built on screw piles. In reality, however, there are discrepancies, such as the permanent café buildings in Bulduri and Asari, which do not comply with the standards and visually degrade the environment. Jūrmala's beach regulations set out detailed rules for use, maintenance and construction, but these are often not consistently enforced in practice. The loss of Blue Flag status has led to a decline in quality standards and the condition of the beaches has deteriorated. To restore Jūrmala's image as a resort city, it is necessary to ensure compliance with regulations and resume participation in international quality programmes.

Artist Laima Puntule recalls her childhood memories of Jūrmala: nature, images, memories, associations, the sea, sand, and the romanticised, independent city with its wooden architecture, white sandy beaches, and shady gardens. Later, during the Soviet era, she remembers Jūrmala as a place filled with crowds of tourists, white cotton hats and refreshing ice cream from the seaside café. Today, Jūrmala is an unfamiliar place with a confused identity, tasteless displays of wealth and promenades dominated by foreign values [5; 8; 3]. The beach in Jūrmala has not been redesigned for years and there is no division between the city's neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods and coastline of Jūrmala are not interconnected. In the coastal area, the neighbourhoods of Jūrmala, which have developed at different times in history, are not naturally separated. There are no informative signs in the city environment indicating the division of neighbourhoods, nor a common map showing this division, even though the neighbourhoods are divided by specific streets. There is also a lack of information points about the main access points to the beach and no indication of which access points are intended for people with mobility impairments. Each neighbourhood has at least one access point and changing room equipped for people with mobility impairments.

There has been no modern development on Jūrmala's city beach for quite some time. The amenities do not fit into the overall seaside landscape and lack a unified design. The benches are uncomfortable, the changing rooms are outdated and the bins are scattered chaotically along the beach. They also do not fit into the overall landscape and are unergonomic for small children as the bin lids are very heavy. The beach cafés are not designed according to a consistent style and do not comply with Jūrmala city café regulations. The beach lacks showers, foot-washing facilities and public drinking water taps. Information signs along the beach, at the main access points and on the beach itself, have remained unchanged since 2000. Most of the access points to the beach in each neighbourhood are in disrepair, the recreational benches are vandalised and the footbridges are ergonomically unsound, causing great discomfort to people with mobility impairments when accessing the beach [1; 13; 11] (Fig. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

Jūrmala's coastline and beaches need to be connected by creating comprehensible, well-developed infrastructure that is easy for both city residents and visitors to understand.



Fig. 2. Current situation of Kaugurciems neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 3. Current situation of Vaivari neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 4. Current situation of Asari neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 5. Current situation of Mellužu neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 6. Current situation of Pumpuru neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 7. Current situation of Jaundubultu neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 8. Current situation of Majoru neighborhood and beach [author's photo documentation, 2024]





Fig. 9. Current situation of Dzintaru neighborhood and beach
 [author's photo documentation, 2024]



Fig. 10. Current situation of Bulduru neighborhood and beach
 [author's photo documentation, 2024]

The development potential of the coastal landscape in Jūrmala in the context of spatial design structures

The landscape is closely linked to human cognitive perception. A person's inner world, emotions, associations and memories form their identity, which is reflected in historical traditions and culture. These are directly influenced by economic, mass media and political situations, but everyone's experiences, family traditions, emotions, feelings and sensations are unique. The coastlines of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga each have their own characteristic features, natural ecosystems, and protected natural features. Most of Latvia's coastal landscape consists of forests [16; 11].

The quality of the Baltic Sea coastline is deteriorating due to political and natural factors, social processes and coastal erosion. A particular transformation of the coastline has begun in recent decades. The Protected Areas Law restricts and regulates the Baltic Sea coastline, stipulating that the economic activity zone in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga protected areas is up to 5 km wide (taking natural conditions into account). Several coastal areas in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga have developed into small fishing villages that hold iconic value. However, these historic fishing villages are disappearing from the coast and being replaced by new buildings that do not fit into the landscape. This threatens the future of the high-quality landscape [8; 9]. Based on beach research, it can be concluded that the existing zoning of active and quiet recreation areas on the beach is irrational and fragmented. Visitors and residents of the city do not observe the existing beach zoning and the existing amenities do not meet the conditions for use of the specific zone. It is necessary to redesign the existing zoning to create a clear concept for the functional zones of Jūrmala's beaches and coastline.

Jūrmala boasts unique architecture, including not only wooden buildings, but also Soviet-era architectural gems which previously

served as medical institutions. Today, half of these institutions no longer exist and do not perform medical functions [15]. Following an assessment of Jūrmala's coastline and beaches, a detailed infrastructure development plan was created within the context of spatial design. Existing neighbourhood-level problems have been addressed, such as the natural division of neighbourhoods, the introduction of information signs and improvements to existing infrastructure. Beach-level problems have also been addressed, such as amenities, beach ergonomics and improving access points and recreation areas.

Based on historical research into the history of Jūrmala's neighbourhoods and beaches, as well as field research into the current situation in these areas, new solutions are proposed to improve Jūrmala's neighbourhoods and beaches, making them more modern and distinctive. Each neighbourhood is assigned a colour that symbolises it and forms its identity. The identity of each neighbourhood is shaped by historical facts, architecture, events and residents, and accent colours are assigned according to these identity symbols. These symbols and colours form the identity of the neighbourhoods, distinguishing them from the overall image of Jūrmala's neighbourhoods. These colours will also be used in accents and information signs at neighbourhood and beach amenities (Fig. 11).

There are currently no signs in the city indicating the boundaries of the neighbourhoods. Instead, each neighbourhood will have informational signs at the beginning to inform city residents and visitors of the neighbourhood they are passing through or visiting. An informative neighbourhood logo would help city visitors and residents to navigate the neighbourhood divisions more easily.

Each neighbourhood has multiple access points to the beach. At the main access points, there is an information sign indicating the neighbourhood name, beach usage regulations, the location of amenities and the zoning of beach activities. Most of these signs have not been changed for several decades and many of them have been vandalised, which detracts from the overall appearance and quality of the landscape. New information signs are planned for placement at beach access points. These new signs will provide information about the neighbourhood name, beach usage restrictions and existing beach amenities. Currently, there is a lack of signage on the main streets, smaller streets and walking streets that run parallel to the beach. Signs indicating the direction to the beach and the walking time from the current location are needed. Therefore, it would be advisable to equip this area with consistent amenities [2; 9; 10].

The planned improvements to Jūrmala City Beach are made from two basic materials: wood and concrete (Fig. 12, 13, 14). Wood symbolises Jūrmala City's natural character, and is also a locally significant material. A composite material is used for the interiors of the changing rooms, public showers and public toilets, which are coloured to reflect the neighbourhood. Concrete is used for the supporting



Fig. 11. Assigned identity and accent color of Jūrmala city neighborhoods: Bulduru, Dzintaru, Majori, Dubulti, Jaundubulti, Pumpuri, Melluži, Asari, Vaivari, Kaugurciems [R.Ozola diagram, 2024]



Fig. 12. Informational signage at the entrances of Jūrmala city neighborhoods [R. Ozola diagram, 2024]



Fig. 13. Improvement of the multifunctional active leisure infrastructure point [R. Ozola visualization, 2024]

structures of the amenities to create greater mass and prevent them from being moved by storms. Using concrete for the framing of landscaping elements would ensure durability and longevity in all coastal conditions [14; 6].

The developed amenities prioritise practicality, ergonomics, quality and durability. They are also easy to install and dismantle for seasonal use. The design goal for all elements is to create amenities suitable for every user. They must fit harmoniously into the overall landscape of Jūrmala's beaches and be arranged along the coastline in a way that does not create a sense of chaos on the beach. The main sources of inspiration for the amenities are the sea, waves, sand and wind. These four elements also characterise the city of Jūrmala itself, and their flowing forms are inspired by the natural processes that take place on the coast [13; 9].

All beach improvement elements complement the surrounding area's theme, giving the beach a greater sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, its history, and character. The amenities would be arranged along the coastline in accordance with the regulations for each neighbourhood's multifunctional activity zone [4; 10].

Conclusions

The city of Jūrmala has a long history, with the first small fishing villages appearing at the beginning of the 13th century. By the 18th century, Jūrmala's beach was already a popular swimming spot for visitors. However, in 2024, it was revealed that Jūrmala's beaches are among the dirtiest in Latvia. This prompted visitors to seek out other seaside beaches. In recent years, the coastal landscape has changed rapidly due to an increasing number of tourists, leading to changes in the beach's function. Beaches are increasingly offering a wide range of activities, which overshadow the basic activities of relaxation, peace, and enjoying nature.

The beaches of Bulduri, Dzintari, Majori, Dubulti and Kaugurciems experience the fastest influx of tourists and visitors. These beaches offer the widest range of activities. Bulduri, Dzintari and Majori have the highest concentration of beach cafés. Due to the abundance of activities, those seeking peaceful relaxation may feel uncomfortable on these beaches. In contrast, the beaches of Jaundubulti, Pumpuri, Asari and Vaivari do not offer many activities. With no more than one seasonal beach café in these areas, most visitors and Jūrmala residents choose to come here to relax.

Based on the information obtained in the study, Jūrmala's city budget is one of the largest among Latvian municipalities. After researching and comparing the beach in Liepāja, for example, with the beach in Jūrmala, it can be concluded that the latter has not been modernised,



Fig. 14. Layout of beach improvement elements [R. Ozola visualization, 2024]

even though the city budget is sufficient for this.

The study concludes that the neighbourhoods lack well-organised access points to the beach, meaning that not all visitors can access it regardless of their mobility. It recommends that more than one well-organised access point should be provided. The beach facilities are neither ergonomic nor harmonious in design and do not fit into the overall coastal landscape. There is a lack of playground equipment for different age groups, as well as public showers, foot-washing facilities and public drinking water taps.

The beach is zoned for both active recreation and peaceful relaxation, but this zoning is fragmented and chaotic. Visitors do not observe it, and there are areas where the signs providing information about the zoning of activities are vague and do not correspond to the actual situation. Therefore, new beach zoning is needed to promote the distribution of specific activities, which would facilitate comfortable recreation for all visitors.

According to the results of the study, Kaugurciems Beach is the best-maintained beach, despite the high number of visitors to the area. This is because the beach is not located in a toll zone and is visited not only by local residents, but also by guests from nearby cities such as Tukums, Talsi and Jelgava. The beach offers a wide range of children's play equipment for different age groups, a modernised lifeguard station and unobtrusive beach cafés. The only drawbacks are the lack of public toilets, showers and foot-washing facilities.

Based on the data obtained in the study, it can be concluded that the city of Jūrmala needs to carry out more rigorous beach cleaning work during the summer season. Regaining its Blue Flag status would promote an increase in the number of new tourists, improve Jūrmala's economic situation and promote the modernisation of the beach while preserving the values and character of the existing landscape.

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Authors

Una Īle, Dr. arch., Associate Professor, leading researcher at the Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Engineering, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies.
E-mail: una.ile@lbtu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9410-1301>

Reičēla Ozola, Mg.arch., Landscape Architect.
E-mail: reicela_ozola@inbox.lv

Kopsavilkums

Pētījumā veikta izpēte par Jūrmalas piekrastes ainavtelpu kā ilgtspējīgu publisko ārtelpu, nodrošinot sezonālu pieejamību, mūsdienīgu vietas identitāti pludmales un piekrastes kontekstā. Izpētīta piekrastes un pludmales telpiskā struktūra, pludmales un piekrastes – Bulduri, Dzintari, Majori, Dubulti, Jaundubulti, Pumpuri, Melluži, Asari, Vaivari, Kaugurciems. Veikta vēsturiskās informācijas izpēte un apsekota piejūras un pludmales teritorija mūsdienās, iegūstot publiskās ārtelpas novērtējumu. Balstoties uz izpētes iegūtajiem datiem, izveidoti piekrastes un pludmales attīstības pasākumi. Kopumā var secināt, ka Jūrmalas pilsētai ir jāveic stingrāki pludmales sakopšanas darbi vasaras sezonas laikā. Jūrmalai ir nepieciešams atgūt „Zilā karoga” statusu, kas sekmētu jaunu tūristu skaita pieaugumu un uzlabotu Jūrmalas ekonomisko stāvokli, kā arī veicinātu pludmales modernizāciju, vienlaikus saglabājot esošās ainavtelpas vērtības un raksturu.